

Commodity Group

Concrete

This commodity group covers concrete and concrete products.

What are the risks/issues associated with this commodity group

Concrete was considered as a high priority area, largely because of the sheer volume of the material that would be used across the Crossrail project. Because of its large volume the responsible procurement of concrete also has a significant implication on BREEAM credit MAT5 i.e. a failure to demonstrate that concrete is responsibly sourced could negatively impact on the BREEAM credit. It was acknowledged that concrete is one of the more simple supply chains to understand, but would assist in mapping out the process to investigate more complex supply chains.

Trade Associations

The Concrete Centre

(British Cement, British Precast Concrete Federation, British Ready-Mixed Concrete Association, Cement Admixtures Association, Cementitious Slag Makers Association, Quarry Products Association, UK Quality Ash Association, Concrete Industry Sustainable Construction Forum)

Certified schemes covering Responsible Procurement

BES 6001

The concrete industry is largely covered by certified management systems such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 systems which are also a key requirement within BES 6001.

Investigations into Supply Chain

Concrete, when procured in the EU is a locally sourced material so its constituents are both traceable and subject to the comprehensive EU regulatory framework. The concrete industry state that it is committed to continued investment to maintain its leadership in this area and a 2020 target of 95% has been established for this performance indicator. Because concrete is largely locally sourced it means that monitoring its supply chain and ensuring its adherence to environmental, social regulatory and legislative benchmarks is relatively straightforward.

The industry also states that ready-mixed concrete is the leading product sector within the concrete industry in delivering responsibly sourced products. 91% of all concrete in 2013 was certified to BES 6001 and of the production tonnage certified, 85% has achieved 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' performance rating.

BES 6001 Framework Standard for the Responsible Sourcing of Construction Products has been achieved by most major concrete companies, including Aggregate Industries, Lafarge Tarmac, Cemex and Hanson.

Proposed Actions for mitigation

Guy Thompson, Head of Architecture, Housing & Sustainability for The Concrete Centre, was invited to present at the ESCIC meeting of 24th June 2011. He explained that BES 6001 was already relatively well established within the concrete industry; indeed this industry had adopted the standard more so than any other at the time and similarly, this standard addressed the ethical considerations of the concrete supply chain more than anything else available.

BES 6001 is based around a set of requirements set into three components:

- Organisational management requirements
- Supply chain management requirements
- Environmental and social requirements

The latter includes a section on health and safety, employment and skills and local communities.

The standard however has a tiered approach to accreditation:

- There are compulsory elements for a pass level, which includes a documented responsible sourcing policy
- And then there are further voluntary requirements required to achieve the higher ratings:
 - Good
 - Very good
 - Excellent

Each level does include an element of investigation into the ethical practices of the supply chain and Guy Thompson, having compared the standard with the ETI base-code specifically, suggested that there appeared to be broad compliance in principle. [It is the opinion of the ESCIC group, that this compliance can only be claimed on the basis that voluntary requirements relating to Section 4.1 of BES 6001 are implemented].



Result of Mitigation

As a result of the above exercise the ESCIC group were satisfied that BES 6001 provides as great a risk mitigation against unethical practice in the concrete supply chain as we can practicably provide at this time. It does not however provide categorical evidence of full compliance with ETI principles.

There are high levels of certification to BES 6001 in the industry, and there is a great degree of awareness of the standard. BRE appear committed to the continual improvement of the accreditation (for example in an industry-wide consultation on what the next revision should consist, in early 2013).

Note that accreditation is "product specific" and per production facility (or multiple sites), so we need to ensure that the correct and relevant certification is provided.

The GreenBookLive website can be used to ascertain supplier compliance to BES 6001 and to view the level attained:

http://www.greenbooklive.com/search/companysearch.jsp?from=20&partid=10021§ionid=0&companyName=&productName=&productType=&certNo=®ionId=0&countryId=0&addressPostcode=&id=153&results_pp=10&sortResultsComp=

Residual Supply chain risks

A concern remains in that the compulsory "pass" requirements only audited 60% of the constituent materials in terms of traceability to an ISO 9001 certificated source; and that a documented responsible sourcing policy is all that is required in order to achieve a "pass".

It is considered that at least a Very Good rating should be sought for concrete procurement public sector projects under the current scope of BES6001.

The group remains concerned with regard to statements such as that below made by the concrete industry

The concrete industry has worked hard to make it easy to specify products certified to BES 6001 "Framework standard for the responsible sourcing of construction products". As well as gaining credits in environmental assessments certification,

BES 6001 provides:

- confidence that an holistic sustainable assessment has been taken to reduce risks in the supply chain.*
- a comprehensive scope covering all elements of materials sourcing, transportation, product manufacture and delivery.*
- rewards for the implementation of certified management systems such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001.*
- risk assessments that cover any ethical trading issues or employment rights.*

By increasing the coverage of products certified to BES 6001, the industry has committed to a transparent, responsible and ethical supply chain.

BES6001 scope (As of April 2013) does not provide comprehensive coverage of ethical trading issues or employment rights beyond a base requirement for certified organizations to have a policy statement. The consultation on BES6001 (ongoing at the time of writing), may help to address these issues.

We would also disagree that BES6001 provides "risk assessments that cover any ethical trading issues or employment rights"